



basic education

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MR D NGEMA
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Dear Mr Ngema

RE: APPRECIATION OF THE PRINCIPALS CONFERENCE

Please allow me to thank the National Teachers Union for inviting our officer to address School Principals on Friday 11 October 2024. It is more than a privilege to get an opportunity to address leaders of our education. Our Branch, Curriculum Policy, Support and Monitoring, takes this seriously as it indicates that the union that has led so many Teachers for more than 100 years has confidence in the National Department of Basic Education.

Although I was unable to attend day one of the proceedings, I must say that I was impressed by the manner in which the union organised the conference. I was fortunate to stay until the reporting session after the work of the commissions. I am convinced that the sector will benefit from this Principals Conference because the National Teachers Union has done well in providing leadership and guidance on several pressing issues which affect the schooling system of our country. In my observation of this good work, I am including the quality of comments, inputs and questions after presentations. As the commissions reported back at plenary, I made further interesting observations.

The first report was honest in outlining the issue of shortage of resources, especially insufficient funding for staffing of schools. Usually, people state problems without suggesting strategies for dealing with them. I was impressed when the report of the commission outlined this challenge and went further to suggest what the country can do to offset the negative impact of the problem.

There are two presentations which also made more sense to me because of their scope and approach. These reports were on ethics and on emotional intelligence. The National Teachers Union was able to come out clearly on the issue of ethics as a vital

ingredient in the teaching profession. To me the inclusion of ethics in the discussions indicated that the union is correctly viewing this school leadership as a responsibility that needs trust, professionalism and curriculum delivery integrity. This again was accompanied by suggested implementable solutions.

Let me confess that I was not very much aware of the role that emotional intelligence can play in improving our operations in the sector. It was an eye-opener for me to learn that our work environment needs this important characteristic. Sometimes people think that the senior leaders of education know everything. I must say that we learn from each other. Principals in one of the reports taught us that emotional intelligence is vital in teaching and learning and it can enhance relationships, communication, classroom management and overall effectiveness which can lead to better learning outcomes for our learners. I think we must take our discussions on emotional intelligence to all employees in the sector (school-based, and office-based).

I was impressed by the creativity of one of the commissions in the conference. My eyes were opened wider than before to the fact that one of the blind spots in the development of curriculum in our country is that we have forgotten pedagogic dynamism. I learnt, for the first time in the Principals Conference, that the kind of a learner envisaged cannot be the same as the kind of a learner envisaged in the 20th century. Now I know that we must re-think the kind of a product of our education as we are introducing the "Three Stream Model". This was a real eye-opener. With technological advancements, we need a different role player for our economy. This good idea of re-thinking the kind of a learner envisaged blends well with Toffler who said, *"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be the one who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn"*. From the work of this commission, I felt that we must re-think the kind of a learner envisaged as we hope to deliver the strengthened skills-based curriculum. Thank you for bringing this important issue to the surface.

Finally, as I thank the National Teachers Union, I have a request that your Teacher Development Directorate come closer to the Branch. I am saying this because I found that the union made a very meaningful analysis of the international benchmarks on reading. I think this skill can be shared with us so that we make a more professional meaning of the results, report better to the nation and craft meaningful support programmes. My sincere thanks to NATU leaders from other provinces.

Once more, I thank NATU for the successful Principals Conference and leadership in general.

Yours sincerely



DR MJB MTHEMBU
BRANCH HEAD: CURRICULUM POLICY, SUPPORT & MONITORING
DATE: 14 OCTOBER 2024

Cc: President: Mr SV Malinga